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C O M M E N C E M E N T A D D R E S S

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Title: "The Graduate R -- for Responsibility"

By

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The completion of requirements for graduation and for advanced degrees merits hearty congratulations and justifies all the pomp and ceremony of a formal commencement, even at the end of a summer quarter. While most of us have learned that we should avoid dramatizing ourselves and every situation in which we find ourselves, this is one event which does warrant a little drama, the academic procession, the colorful regalia, the special program of speaking and music, the reporting by newspapers and radio and television, the crowd of relatives and friends.

At one commencement the Italian parents of a graduate had sat patiently through the long and abstruse address of the president, an impressive figure in his academic accouterments. Finally the mother turned to her husband and plaintively inquired, "Papa, da bigga man in da fancy robe, what he say?" In a hoarse whisper came the reply, "Mamma, he say school out." Whatever the stage of your higher education, whatever the degree you receive, I trust that this occasion will mean more to you than just "school out!" For many of you this is the attainment of a long-cherished goal, the opening of a big door of opportunity. For some members of the Faculty and of the Board of Trustees, it may be just one more routine ceremony, to be performed with due urbanity and brevity.

It is more than a gesture of courtesy for me to declare that I feel highly honored to be the speaker on this occasion. Any college or university president appreciates a captive audience of this size and is flattered by the inference that what he ~~may say~~ ^{has to say} is worthy of your time. The gracious words of Dr. Fawcett's presentation inflate my ego somewhat; the realization that I remember neither who spoke or what he said when I received my master's degree from this university some years ago shrinks my head back to its normal size.

I do wish to testify to the cordial relationships which have existed through the years between these two universities, located at opposite corners of this metropolis. It is to the credit of the administrators of The Ohio State University that not a trace of either a domineering ^{attitude} or a patronizing attitude has been manifested toward the older, but much smaller, church college, theological seminary, and music conservatory known as Capital University. In a steady stream our graduates have come to this campus for further study, most of them a credit to both institutions. Faculty members of both universities have worked together on committees and in professional societies with mutual benefit and enjoyment. When I came to Capital in 1946 I met Dr. Fawcett as the Superintendent of the Bexley Schools. A few years later, after his tenure at Akron, I rejoiced in his excellent leadership as Superintendent of the Columbus Schools. I am among ^{the} the large number who have followed with admiration his vigorous and sound administration of one of the nation's largest and best universities.

In Ohio, as in no other state, there has been a spirit of mutual respect, confidence, and cooperation on the part of the presidents of the state universities, the municipal universities, and the private or non-tax-supported colleges and universities. All of us recognize that the task confronting our institutions today and tomorrow ^{is} tax the resources of all of our schools and demand increasingly our hearty collaboration.

Particularly since Dr. Ronald Thompson so dramatically depicted the tidal wave or deluge of students about to inundate our campuses in the sixties and thereafter, commencement speakers have elected to discuss this crucial problem, ^{future enrollments} ventilating their opinions on how we might best

meet the formidable challenge of the future. Quality along with quantity, standards of scholarship, revision~~s~~ of curriculum, procurement of staff, construction of more and more facilities, and some magic to provide the inevitably larger budgets -- these have been the topics which educators, industrialists, civic leaders, and clergymen have presented ^{I suspect in many more instances} (with much more assurance than was justified in most instances).

I suspect that the young men and women who had to listen to such addresses were more bored than edified and that their chief reaction was a sigh of relief that they had managed to get through college before the situation became so drastic. I shall spare you more of the same; I shall deny myself the pleasure of pontificating on these problems; I shall try to speak directly to you and your personal interests.

Actually, the basic problem of education today is what it always was: a clear statement of our objectives and a sensible way to attain them. "Money alone won't do it," as the heading of an ^{recent} article in one of our educational journals ^{clearly} ~~recently~~ declared. Money will buy buildings and equipment and staff, but all the money we may covet for our respective institutions will not assure a truly adequate education for our students. We need to decide what we are trying to do ^{to} ~~for~~ and with and ^{to} ~~to~~ these young people, interpret our objectives to our teachers and students so they may intelligently and purposefully share in the educative process, and then get the job done as thoroughly as we possibly can.

After all these centuries of formal education it may seem incredible that we are not agreed on exactly what we are attempting to do. What a furor of editorials swept through our newspapers and periodicals after Sputnik was placed into orbit, what castigation of our entire educational

system, what heated but smoky debate about curriculum and standards of elementary, secondary, and higher education! Suddenly every writer and speaker became an authority on the philosophy and methodology of education, and those who had really studied and worked at the profession were targets of conflicting criticism. Yet it must be admitted that the most important issue in education today, as vital to our nation's security and welfare as military strength and scientific progress, is a clear and convincing definition of our basic objectives at the various stages of the educative process.

Now of course I am aware ~~of that fact~~ that every college and university catalog prominently displays a statement of objectives, usually in ponderous phraseology. I recall an anecdote, however, which leads me to distrust this fact. At a church convention the ministers severely criticized the president of their denominational college because, it was ~~asserted~~ ^{observed}, the students frequently stayed out late at night. The president answered the charge by the rather naive protest: "Chentlemen, dis chust cannot pe true! Why, it says right in our catalog dot all shtudents must pe in dere rooms py ten o'clock." Here, as in so many instances, "saying it is so does not make it so," and "should be ain't is."

In the earlier years of our education our chief concern is with the basic tools of communication, the traditional three R's, representing reading, writing, and arithmetic. As we move up the ladder of the educative process into our colleges and universities, what is our chief concern, what is it that we are trying to develop within our maturing young men and women? What really qualifies them for graduation? The

recent remark of President Pusey of Harvard says it in a sentence: "The chief aim of undergraduate education is to discover what it means to be a man." One of the speakers in a panel discussion at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges in Boston last January tried to sum it up in the one word, "Character." He contended that after four years of higher education a young man or woman should have developed qualities which confer upon their possessor real character. Ordway Tead defines character in much the same way: "Character is a kind of continuing, over-all qualitative response in action to all the situations with which the individual is confronted. Character is manifested in a certain personal resolution and determination to adhere to the best the person knows and can discover in his choices of activity and commitment."

In line with these thoughts, I should like to summarize ~~what~~ ^{I believe} we are trying to help each of you achieve through your higher education in the one word, "Responsibility." Let me call this

"The Graduate R -- for Responsibility."

Surely by now you have recognized a personal responsibility for truth. Whether in the physical sciences, the study of languages and literature, speech, the fine arts and music, or social studies, you have come to realize the extreme importance of learning and using "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." A truly responsible teacher will not permit himself to present to his class opinionated assertions, his own or those he quotes, without challenge. He abhors inaccuracy in citing a scientific formula, a date in history, a mathematical equation, a statistical table, or a literary gem. He studiously avoids slanting facts or figures to fit his presuppositions or to bolster a weak argument.

And he disciplines his students to be rigorously responsible in their use of data, seeking to instill in them a passionate responsibility for truth. Likewise, the responsible student will challenge assertions, will check statistics, will demand documentation and proof, will insist on the truth as he listens and reads and thinks, also writes and speaks. He will avoid becoming like that caricature of a scholar whose mother described so accurately, if ungrammatically, by saying: "He knows an awful lot of things, but so many of them jist ain't so."

Here is an objective particularly relevant to this age of the expert in propagandizing and huckstering. The patent fallacies of much specious advertizing on radio and television become apparent immediately to the intelligent person who feels a responsibility for truth. The typical campaign oratory and contrive postures of political candidates cannot delude the educated person, dedicated to the truth and skillful in identifying it. The countless and conflicting philosophies of life expounded by columnists and commentators will not confuse the man or woman who has learned to distinguish truth from blatant assertion or crude distortion. A democracy can function effectively only if its citizens insist on knowing the truth and recognize it when they find it.

In this respect we can rightly insist that the education of our people is a prime requisite to the security and welfare of our nation. *today and in the future.*

This objective of our educative process is fundamental to all of life, to our vocational success, to effective living in all its aspects. Our employers and clients will respect our intellectual integrity, our readiness to admit *error and* ignorance where it exists and replace it with fact, to recognize prejudice where it exists and replace it with objectivity.

Our responsibility for truth under all circumstances will win the trust of those ~~whom~~ we serve and merit advancement and success. Through all the years that lie ahead you will search diligently for truth wherever you can find it, respecting the opinions of others but insisting on the right of the individual to be true to what he ~~knows~~ ^{believes to be} is true. This valid objective of higher education is indispensable to the educative process itself and should be one of the most conspicuous benefits of higher education in future years. Truly ~~it~~ ^{this} is a "graduate R."

This sense of responsibility is twins: in the field of the mind it is responsibility to the truth; in the field of the spirit it is responsibility to the right. Education is not only an intellectual process; it is also a moral process. One may acquire a prodigious amount of ^{info. &} knowledge, yet lack the moral directives to use it aright. Indeed, as has been said by many others, an immoral person becomes all the more dangerous to society as his knowledge and skills increase. The security of the individual and the group depends upon a sound moral sense, a responsibility to the right.

Here is an objective particularly relevant to this age of the expert in rationalizing and condoning unethical practices and selfish motives. One who has been truly educated cannot tolerate wrong, evil, injustice to others, the deprivation of the rights and freedoms of any class or ^{any} nation or ~~race~~ ^{area}. In our study of history, language, commerce, and government, are we learning how to exploit others for our selfish advantage? Or are we learning how to share with others our precious heritage of justice and equality, freedom and opportunity? The epic contest between East and West will be decided ultimately in the arena of the right, in

terms of moral values rather than material values. Likewise, the ethical decisions and actions of each individual in his daily life will determine his destiny. A truly educated person recognizes the inviolable sanctity of the right and will not sell his soul for professional promotion or financial income. As a result of an adequate higher education, he will have developed a dedication to the right and the skill to identify the right and act accordingly.

The moral integrity to call things by their right names, to recognize sin and vice and evil whether in others or in ourselves, and to refuse to compromise with what is wrong under any circumstances will win the respect and confidence of others. Even those who because of weakness or perversion cannot free themselves from what they know ^{is} ~~is~~ wrong, will admire the man or woman with character and conviction. In the moment of truth they will come to you for the services which can be provided only by one who has moral integrity, a responsibility ^{for} ~~to~~ the right. Through the years that lie ahead you will search diligently for the right, respecting the opinions and convictions of others but insisting on the obligation of the individual to be consistent with his own ideals and ^{true} ~~loyal~~ to his own conscience. Call it honor, integrity, honesty, or just plain goodness, this commitment to the right is a valid objective of higher education, indispensable to the educative process itself and one of the most conspicuous benefits of higher education ^{from} ~~in~~ future years. Truly it is a "graduate R."

Here is the real dignity of man and of life, this sense of responsibility to truth and to right. Here is the only alternative to the "posture of frustration" which overwhelms those who are concerned only about those ^{things} ~~things~~

things that are so vulnerable to the vicissitudes of life, to inflation and depression, to bombs and biological warfare, to drastic political and social changes. We are now passing through a revolution more extensive and more intensive than ever before in history. As yet no one can predict the shape of things to come, and we find it distressingly difficult to face up to the adjustments which must be made and somehow will be made. We need desperately to have something to build on, to give us guide lines, to empower us and motivate us, individually and as a nation. I submit that in our dedicated sense of responsibility to truth and right we have the eternal verities, the valid commitments, which will be adequate for all the exigencies of ~~life~~ today and tomorrow.

This sincere responsibility to truth and right will deliver us from the temptation to succumb to the prevalent sin and idolatry of America, namely, hedonism. Whatever their professed religion, literally millions of our people are devoted to pleasure as the chief good in life, willing to pay any price to satisfy their desires and appetites. This resort to sensual living in the lurid glare of the mushroom-shaped cloud with its threat of the imminent destruction of mankind is unworthy of an educated person, is fatal to the future of the individual and of our civilization. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," and "after us, the deluge," are not the slogans of the educated, the responsible person. Though more complicated than ever before in history, the political, economic, social, and moral problems of the world today can be solved if resolutely confronted by men and women whose education has made them unswervingly responsible to truth and right.

Note the etymology of that word, "responsible." It implies that we are able to respond to the situation, whatever it may be. This requires two

qualities in us, both of them the result of an adequate education: a willingness or desire to respond, and ^{the} a competence or skill in doing so. Perhaps ^{now} you realize why you were required to take so many and such varied courses of study, some of which did not seem really pertinent to your prospective vocation and interest. ^{in later life.} Perhaps now you recognize the tremendously important difference between professional training and ~~a~~ liberal education. Alfred North Whitehead said it well:

"There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal, and ^{there can be} no liberal education which is not technical: that is, no education which does not impart both technique and intellectual vision." Somehow, along with our peering into test-tubes and microscopes, our poring over pages of ^{quantity} ~~words~~ and columns of figures, we must find truth and right and development a responsibility to truth and right. Somehow, along with all the disciplines of ~~our various areas~~ ^{the courses} of study, ^{we have taken} we must develop self-discipline, a dedication to truth and right and a skill in discovering and applying truth and right in every life-situation.

Even at this final moment, the conclusion of one stage of your higher education and the commencement of another, I would confront you with a very direct and personal question which will, I hope, recur to you every time you glance at the diploma you are about to receive. In the face of all the strain and stress of life today, in the face of all the hard decisions you must make and sacrifices that will be required of you, can you rise above the ignoble temptation to wish that you were ^{just} ~~only~~ an animal and not a man, homo sapiens, homo faber, homo dei imago? Can you exult in the fact that, come what may, you are an intelligent human being, the maker of tools and objects of art and ~~of~~ a purposeful ~~existence~~ ^{way of life}, the limited and imperfect image of a Supreme Being to whom truth

and right are of utmost importance? Can you face the future with the confidence and courage of a hero who knows that ^{there are} some things are universally and eternally valid, and that there is a victory for him whose faith ^{will} enable him to survive and conquer? Have you developed a dedication to truth and right which makes you a truly responsible person? If so, you are to be congratulated on achieving the graduate R, Responsibility and your university can ^{now} proudly and confidently confer upon you the degree to which you are entitled.